

THE VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ❖ January 2016



Can the Internet Solve the Property Tax Crisis?

NSEA Pledges Help to 'In Need of Improvement Schools'



Twitter: Flexible & Free Professional Development

Upcoming Assignments

Nebraska Legislature

Jan. 6

■ **What:** The Nebraska Legislature is now in session. There will be education-related bills on the agenda, some friendly to public education students and teachers, and some not so friendly.

■ **Details:** Keep tabs on education issues as they develop by watching the NSEA website at nsea.org or by reading *The Voice* each month. You can also sign up for NSEA's Legislative updates at:

nsea.org/nsea-text-messaging

Become a Leader!

February 5

■ **What:** The filing period for those seeking NSEA regional and state leadership positions is now open. Members will vote beginning in March to fill nearly three dozen vacancies on six district boards and on the NSEA Board of Directors. As always, there is an emphasis on encouraging minority members to seek office.

■ **Details:** See the list of vacancies and deadlines on Page 20.

Never too Early to Plan for RAA

March 2

■ **What:** Celebrate the 111th birthday of Dr. Seuss on NEA's Read Across America Day, Wednesday, March 2. Start planning now!

■ **Details:** NEA provides plenty of materials for your event at: nea.org/grants/plan-a-reading-event

Nominate a Winner!

You Know Great Leaders, Teachers; Honor Them

From its founding in a small frame building in Brownville in 1867, to the past 80-plus years across the street from the State Capitol, NSEA has maintained a presence in state education policy.

Now, your Association will begin to celebrate 150 years of advocating for students and public schools at Delegate Assembly in Lincoln April 15-16, 2016.

That would be a wonderful time for one of your deserving colleagues to be honored for his or her work.

Any NSEA member can nominate a member teacher, ESP or deserving group for awards to be given at Delegate Assembly. Mailed nominations must be postmarked by Sunday, Jan. 31, and sent to NSEA, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Nominations may also be submitted online, with required supporting material mailed to NSEA. Find online nomination forms are at the 'Call for Nominations' link at:

www.nsea.org

The 2016 Delegate Assembly will be held at Embassy Suites in Lincoln. Association members are eligible for these awards:

■ **NSEA Rookie of the Year:** To honor a first-year teacher who sparkled during his or her 2014-15 school year.

■ **Award for Teaching Excellence:** To honor a teacher who has excelled in the classroom over a long period of time.

■ **Education Support Professional of the Year:** To honor an ESP who has excelled in his or her job.

Finalists will be notified in March, and winners revealed at Delegate Assembly on Saturday, April 16. Recipients receive a \$250 cash award.

NSEA members are also eligible for:

■ **The Great Plains Milestone Award:** Honors an individual/group for promoting human, civil rights.

■ **Community Service:** Honors individual NSEA members and/or local associations actively involved in volunteer work outside of classroom hours.

■ **Local Public Relations:** Honors local associations for outstanding communication within the association.

These awards will also be presented:

■ **Friend of Education:** To honor an individual or organization that has made a statewide contribution to education. This is NSEA's highest honor.

■ **Media Award:** This honor recognizes a newspaper, television or radio station for coverage of education issues.

For more details, go to:

www.nsea.org



2015 Honoree: Lewiston Education Association's Devin Garcia, right, earned the 2015 NSEA Rookie of the Year, presented by Deb Gnuse, NEA Director from Grand Island.

Cover Story:

Nebraska's K-12 public schools rely heavily on property taxes for funding. State aid helps, but — for those districts that receive such aid — can fluctuate wildly. What if there were a growing source of untapped revenue? For details, turn to

Page 7



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A Force for Positive Change



**NSEA President
Nancy Fulton**

“

Progress... will take hundreds of thousands of us voicing the same thoughts, beating the same drum.

”

Another year has passed and we have entered 2016 with both anticipation and apprehension.

In one of the final actions of 2015, Congress passed a new federal education law with surprising bipartisan and bicameral support. Passage followed a yearlong effort by NEA to mobilize members, asking them to encourage Congress to end the onerous top down approach of No Child Left Behind.

NEA members – including many of you – made nearly a half a million contacts with Congress via telephone, e-mail, letter or individual conversation. That amounted to huge pressure to replace the emphasis on testing with a shift of focus to closing the opportunity gaps of all categories of students. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaces what educators and students have lived with for more than a decade. Students who are high school seniors this year have spent their entire K-12 education experience, and a large majority of our current educators have spent their entire career teaching, under the requirements of NCLB.

With ESSA, decisions regarding Nebraska schools will rightfully return to the hands of Nebraska educators, parents and community patrons. ESSA provides Nebraska school leaders the authority to do what is best for their districts, while keeping a particular focus on those students most in need.

This meaningful victory – and the change this victory delivered – was years in the making. It came not by the effort of one or two NEA leaders over the course of a couple of weeks, but through the persistence of thousands upon thousands of NEA members over a decade. It shows the real power that comes with numbers, and that such numbers can force positive change for our students.

Heavy Reading

My husband recently read a book seemingly unrelated to education, *Animal Weapons* by Douglas Emlen. In conversation, he would point out to me how Emlen’s concepts relate to the work of NSEA. So I decided to read the book over the holiday break.

Emlen repeatedly illustrates how organisms ranging from bugs and beetles to humans

evolve larger and more functional weapons for the purpose of species survival. He artfully points to competition for resources, economic defensibility, and dueling as mechanisms fueling the inevitable arms race for improvement.

He also points out that the costs associated with growing and building the weapons to foster improvement are huge. Tangible and emotional resources are taxed; size and accuracy of input must send a reliable signal that we know what we are about; and strategies must be in place to be in the right place with the right resources at the right time to influence the right outcome.

Finally, as soon as the opportunity to battle for positive change passes, the process of evolving and rebuilding for the next challenge will begin all over again.

Pretty heavy reading for a holiday, wouldn’t you say?

‘What Does This Mean?’

Like those examples in *Animal Weapons*, as an Association, it is to our advantage to use our tools as we embark on the second semester of the school year. We face a challenging 2016 Nebraska Legislative session and we must acclimate to the new accountability system for Nebraska public schools (AQuESTT). We must also begin the transition to ESSA.

I know what you’re thinking: “What does that mean for me?”

First, we have numbers, as mentioned earlier. NSEA is 28,000 members strong, and all of us can identify teachable moments to share with policymakers. Share how your classroom or school has been successful for students. Share how your policymaker can influence and craft good education legislation.

In doing so, please use NSEA as a resource. We have research that can provide reliable facts and data. There are opportunities to testify before legislative committees, state-based committees on which to serve, and interview teams to recommend candidates for election or re-election.

Progress won’t come via the work of a handful of NSEA members or leaders. It will take hundreds of thousands of us voicing the same thoughts, beating the same drum. Join us – and we can be a force for positive change!



NSEA locals from around the state appear or are mentioned in this issue. Look for:

ArapahoePage 9, 23
Axtell.....Page 24

Finding Nebraska’s Great Public Schools (GPS)

Bancroft-Rosalie.....Page 23	Holdrege.....Page 24	Papillion-LaVistaPage 9
Bellevue.....Page 15	Kimball.....Page 23	Peru State College.....Page 13
College of Saint Mary.....Page 13	Midland University.....Page 13	University of Nebraska-Omaha.....Page 12
Doane College.....Page 13	Millard.....Page 7, 9	Wayne State College.....Page 12
Douglas County West.....Page 23	Norfolk.....Page 23	
Hastings.....Page 9	Omaha.....Page 15	

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Initial State Report Ranks Most Schools Good, Better

NSEA Pledges to Assist Three School Sites Needing 'Improvement'

New state accountability results released by the Nebraska Department of Education last month classifies more than 92 percent of Nebraska public school buildings as excellent, great or good.

The rankings came under the state's new accountability system known as AQuESTT, Accountability for a Quality Education System Today and Tomorrow. Each of Nebraska's 1,133 public school sites were ranked as excellent, great, good or needs improvement.

"The new accountability system is a broad and deep review of what goes on in our schools. It tells us what most Nebraska educators know – that public schools in our state are doing very good work," said NSEA President Nancy Fulton.

"That doesn't mean we can't improve on the work we do," said Fulton. "AQuESTT, however, gives us all a starting line on the road to improvement."

Figures provided by the NDE showed that 147 or 13.01 percent of schools were classified excellent; 473 or 41.86 percent were great; 423 or 37.43 percent were good; and 87, or 7.7 percent; were designated as in need of improvement.

As part of the accountability program required by state statute, three school buildings were selected from those deemed "in need of improvement." With the assistance of the department, the staff and administration at those sites will develop a plan of improvement that will eventually require State Board of Education approval. The implementation of the improvement plans is backed by \$750,000 in state monies to pay for consultants and other needs.

Those sites were Druid Hill Elementary School in Omaha; Loup County Elementary School in Taylor; and Santee

Middle School, at Santee. Fulton pledged to local association leaders in those districts that NSEA would allocate assistance and expertise to aid with the process (see sidebar).

Omaha Education Association President Chris Proulx said Druid Hill Elementary staff are dedicated to giving children the best education possible.

"While we may not all agree with the state's selection of our school district for this designation," said Proulx, "I think we can agree that we will welcome the state's assistance and will work with all involved to push Druid Hill Elementary to the next level of excellence."

Beyond Test Scores

AQuESTT is broader than past state and federal systems in that it goes beyond test scores to classify schools on, among other factors, growth, improvement and graduation rates as well as a detailed analysis of individual schools. Based on individual school findings, schools may receive credit toward their classification for certain improvements and/or also lose classification points.

The AQuESTT results showed that 110, or 9.73 percent, of the schools received credit in their classification based on the Evidence-Based Analysis approach, which surveyed schools to determine practices, policies and procedures they utilize that are aligned to the six tenets of AQuESTT. Those tenets are positive partnerships, relationships and student success; transitions; educational opportunities and access; college and career readiness; assessment; and educator effectiveness.

Extra Credit

The NDE's findings also indicate that:

- 38, or about 3.36 percent, of the schools received credit for increasing the percentage of their students who were proficient on state tests.

NSEA Will Work With Staff on Improvement

NSEA President Nancy Fulton was in quick contact with the local association presidents in the three school districts deemed "in need of improvement" by the state.

Fulton sent letters to each local association president, pledging that NSEA staff and resources would be available to assist as the administration and staff at those sites develop improvement plans.

"I want you to know that NSEA will work with you as your building or district goes through the process of developing an improvement plan," Fulton wrote.

NSEA's network of experienced organizational specialists – one is assigned to every school district and building in the state – would be one resource. Another excellent resource is NSEA's Jay Sears, who has worked with the State Board of Education for years, and is as familiar with AQuESTT as anyone in the Department of Education.

"He will be willing to meet with you to answer questions and work through the process, as well," said Fulton.

Finally, Fulton urged educators in those three districts, as well as in the other 87 school districts designated as in need of improvement, to keep a positive frame of mind.

"While some might view the designation as a priority school as a negative, I think we can all benefit from a dose of self-analysis and review from time-to-time. Such a process will only make us smarter and stronger, and will benefit the children we teach," wrote Fulton.

Questions? Call your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047.

- 27, or 2.39 percent, received credit for growth because a certain percentage of the same students tested last year in reading and math improved their tests scores this year.

- 32, or 2.83 percent, of the schools received credit for improvement because the school's average state test scores over the past three years improved.

Detailed information on the AQuESTT system is available at:

www.aquestt.com

Southeast Nebraska in Need of Tax Preparation Volunteers

Active teachers or retired teachers in southeast Nebraska who are interested in community service might consider this opportunity: working in the Tax Preparation Program for the Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders counties.

The need for language interpreter and other volunteers is crucial, said Balsam Ali, an outreach specialist for the program.

Ali said thousands of hard-working individuals and families in the area count on the no-cost tax preparation program. They also count on

the tax returns and tax credits they receive to make ends meet.

Volunteers are needed as tax preparers, site coordinators, intakes, greeters and interpreters at various locations in Lincoln and in Lancaster and Saunders counties. Volunteers may work at the site of their choosing during the 2016 tax season, from January to April 2016.

For more details, click on the link labeled Volunteer Circle; click on Tax Prep Program, and then click on Apply and fill out the form at:

communityactionatwork.org

“I spend my days telling children that learning is important and education is important. So I think it’s important that they see that through what I model, not just what I say.”

Kelcy Tapp, elementary principal in Papillion and graduate of Doane’s bachelor’s, Education Specialist and both Master of Education programs.



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Common Sense for Main Street Fairness, Property Tax Relief

Online Sales Could Help Schools, Offer Property Tax Relief

If the cries for lower property taxes in Nebraska were a tidal wave, the Sower atop the State Capitol dome might be swept away.

The pleas for relief have been building for years, particularly since state aid to schools has not kept pace with costs.



'16 Nebraska Legislature

Concern about the growing reliance on property taxes was emphasized to state senators during a Fall 2014 tour of the state supporting a proposed modernization of the state tax system. At hearing after hearing, scores of taxpaying citizens testified in a unified chorus that property taxes, not sales or income tax, were in need of attention from senators.

The coming tax revenue discussions that deal with property tax and state aid are important to educators.

The vast majority of school funding comes from either property tax or state aid, and one affects the other. More state funding of education through state aid lessens the local reliance on property tax.

Finicky Funding

State aid, however, can be finicky. As NSEA Director of Government Relations Jason Hayes told the Legislature's Revenue Committee in March, the state aid formula "is altered on a regular basis to fit not what is needed in K-12 schools as indicated by the formula, but to fit what the state can afford at a particular time, regardless of the need."

That approach has led to wild swings in state aid, with school districts sometimes seeing aid cut by hundreds of thousands of dollars from year to year – and that's for the school districts that receive aid. Fewer than half of Nebraska's 240-plus public school districts actually receive state funds.

But what if senators could tap a steadily growing source of revenue – and dedicate that revenue directly to an Education Trust

NSEA's Board of Directors approved this Legislative Agenda in November. It will guide the Association's work with senators and other policymakers through the 2016 session that begins on Wednesday, Jan. 6:

2016 Legislative Agenda

Because the focus in our classrooms should be teaching and learning; because the best investment we can make for the future is a strong combination of teaching and learning; and because teaching and learning serve as foundational blocks for strong schools, a strong economy and strong families, NSEA's 2016 Legislative goals focus on issues that support teaching and learning.

NSEA's legislative goals for 2016 include increasing the state's investment in P-16 public education and ensuring any changes made to the state tax structure do not reduce funding used to support strong schools, a strong economy and strong Nebraska families. It is essential that the state has the resources necessary to return to the wise tradition of investing in excellent public schools, world-class colleges and universities, and infrastructure that boosts our economy and creates a high quality of life. Thus, NSEA will work to:

- Provide state and local funding that supports quality public education for every student;
- Ensure public school students and staff have respectful, safe and secure learning and working environments; and,
- Provide increased public funding for mental health services and resources in schools;
- Encourage state programs giving educators more time to teach and students more time to learn curriculum;
- Support programs for reducing class sizes;
- Promote and protect public education programs that benefit Nebraska students, teachers, higher education faculty and education support professionals.
- Ensure the protection of collective bargaining rights;
- Maintain prudent management and funding of the school employees' retirement plans.

NSEA believes that any changes to the state's tax system must be revenue neutral or provide for additional funding for education. Education funding cuts first and foremost hurt students, but also harm staff, schools, colleges and our economy. Stability and predictability in state and local funding for schools is crucial. It is in the best interest of all Nebraskans to keep schools fully staffed. Maintaining a broad, deep and challenging curriculum and appropriate class size will help raise student achievement and ensure our state's educational and economic competitiveness.

Fund that could be used to both reduce property taxes and smooth the volatile ups and downs in state aid?

What if that revenue source were to provide anywhere from \$40 to \$140 million a year in revenue – and is expected to grow?

Upward Trend

Requiring all merchants to collect and remit sales tax on all online purchases would generate that much income for state coffers, and perhaps more, though it is difficult to pinpoint Nebraska's potential in untapped Internet sales tax revenues.

In testimony to the Legislature's Revenue Committee a year ago, Mary Jane Egr, legal counsel for the committee and a former state tax commissioner, told senators that some estimates range as high as \$140 million. More recent estimates, Egr

told senators, are in the \$35 to \$50 million range.

Whatever the number, few would argue that revenue will only grow as online shopping becomes more the norm than the exception. The website Statista reports that e-commerce sales in the U.S. hit the \$211 billion mark in 2013, and topped \$237 billion in 2014, an increase of 12 percent, an upward trend that has been maintained over the past dozen years.

But capturing tax dollars on those sales has been difficult for states. A 1992 U.S. Supreme Court decision held online merchants must collect and remit sales taxes only in states where the merchant has a physical presence. In other words, if a resident of North Platte buys a book on Amazon.com, and Amazon has no warehouse, office or storefront presence in the state,

Amazon does not collect and remit the state sales tax on that purchase. When an online merchant does not collect and remit the tax, the purchaser is required to report and pay the sales tax – but few Nebraskans are aware the law gives them that responsibility. Requiring merchants to collect and remit sales tax on all online purchase would eliminate the requirement for individual taxpayers and would result in additional sales tax revenue for the state.

The issue is also one of fairness to home-grown, Main Street businesses. Online purchases, without a sales tax, give Internet retailers a clear and unfair advantage — a government-subsidized competitive advantage, if you will — over brick-and-mortar businesses that line the Main Streets of Nebraska communities. The owners and employees of those businesses — and their communities — suffer from this unfair competition.

Congress has attempted to address the issue, with little luck. In 2013, the U.S. Senate has approved the Marketplace Fairness Act, which would empower states to collect sales tax from remote merchants. The House of Representatives, however, never had a chance to vote on the issue. Although it had bipartisan support, top Republicans opposed the Act, and it never came to a vote. Another, similar version was introduced in the U.S. Senate in

March, and had bipartisan support, but also has yet to reach a vote.

Some state legislatures, including, notably the New York legislature, have amended state law to require such remote vendors to charge sales tax resident. The results of those efforts are mixed and ongoing.

NSEA Supports Trust Fund

It is almost a certainty that, eventually, merchants will be required to collect and remit state sales taxes on all online sales. Nebraska state senators believe so, and have already identified the online sales tax as a source of revenue. LB200, signed by Gov. Ricketts in 2015, clearly allocates the proceeds of online sales tax to the state's property tax credit fund for three years after Congress untangles the sales tax web.

What if, at that point, Nebraska's online sales tax revenue started flowing into a fund to truly affect property taxes and at the same time alleviate the ups and downs of state aid funding?

After all, Nebraska already has certain funds dedicated to certain causes. The tax on gasoline goes straight to roads. Lottery proceeds go directly to environmental and educational causes. Could not the online sales tax proceeds go to the Nebraska Educational Trust Fund? Seven other states have some type of education trust fund.

In each of the past two sessions of the

Nebraska Legislature, NSEA has supported legislation to create an Education Trust Fund.

LB438 was introduced by Lincoln Sen. Adam Morfeld in 2015, and will carry over to the 2016 session. It would allocate 10 percent of sales and use taxes from online purchases to the Excellence in Education Trust Fund.

Like an earlier bill from Lincoln Sen. Kate Bolz, LB438 proposes to use the revenues from online sales tax to stabilize state aid to schools funding. Morfeld's bill would also allocate a portion of revenues to "develop innovative educational grant programs for primary and secondary schools."

Under Morfeld's plan, the Legislature would determine when cash from the trust fund would be used to shore up the state aid plan.

With the border-to-border hue and cry for property tax relief, it makes sense to level the playing field for local merchants by requiring online merchants to also collect and remit sales tax to Nebraska. That is simply a matter of fairness.

The Internet sales tax is barely touched and has a potential for unchecked growth. Tapping this source of revenue and dedicating it to a cause just as important as our state's roads systems — our children — will also provide property tax relief!



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NCLB Left Behind by ESSA Victory

Fulton: Nebraska Teachers Welcome Law to Create Greater Opportunity for Every Student

The U.S. Senate last month approved S. 1177, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a bipartisan and bicameral bill to reauthorize the federal education law known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. President Barack Obama attached his signature to the bill the next day.

“Passage of this bill is a victory for students and educators,” said Nancy Fulton, NSEA president. “The goal is to focus on providing opportunity for all students. Nebraska is in a good position to take advantage of the lessening of federal control. We have been deliberative and inclusive in building our state accountability system and we are well ahead of the curve and ready for the change this new law brings to public education.”

The Senate bill passed on a vote of 85-12. Nebraska Sen. Deb Fischer voted in favor of passage. Sen. Ben Sasse voted against. The legislation replaces the long-failed provisions of No Child Left Behind, passed in 2003.

Nebraska’s new accountability system – AQuESTT – is broader than past state and federal systems in that it goes beyond test scores to classify schools on, among other factors, growth, improvement and graduation rates as well as a detailed analysis of individual schools.

While states will no longer be under the NCLB’s Average Yearly Progress sanctions, there is still a requirement for testing ELA; Math grades 3 through 8 and once in high school; plus testing in science in one grade each in elementary, middle and high school.

Students and educators have lived with the unintended consequences of NCLB for a dozen years. NSEA members have waged

“Educators will now have a seat at the table when it comes to making decisions that affect their students and classrooms.”

**— Nancy Fulton,
NSEA President**



an unprecedented mobilization and advocacy campaign on behalf of Nebraska students in an effort to turn the page on NCLB failures and to bring in a new federal education law that provides more opportunity for all students.

“Educators will now have a seat at the table when it comes to making decisions that affect their students and classrooms,” said Fulton.

This new legislation will also work to close the opportunity gaps for students by providing a new system that includes an ‘opportunity dashboard’ with indicators of school success and student support, said Fulton.

“Not only does it reduce the amount of standardized testing in schools, but it decouples high-stakes decisions and statewide testing so students have more time to develop critical thinking while educators do what they love — inspire a lifelong love of learning,” she said.

For NSEA members, the stakes couldn’t have been higher. The extraordinary effort to get Congress to rewrite NCLB, resulted in an unprecedented bipartisan and bicameral compromise and eventual bill language in late November.

Prior to the Senate’s approval, the bill sailed through the U.S. House on a 359-64 vote.

Leading up to passage, educators mobilized in Nebraska and across the nation, using face-to-face meetings, phone calls, petitions, e-mails and social media to urge Congress to bring the joy of teaching and learning back to the classroom. Educators nationwide made nearly a half million individual contacts to members of Congress.

“Today, the U.S. Senate took a bold and historic step to usher in a new era in public education,” said NEA President Lily Eskelsen García. “This is a deserved victory for public education because the Every Student Succeeds Act will ensure all students have equal opportunity to a high-quality public education regardless of ZIP Code.”

Fourth Grade: Get Field Trip Grant to Homestead National Monument

National Park Foundation Funding Will Reimburse Transportation Cost

Homestead National Monument of America is one of 186 federal sites selected to receive a 2016 field trip grant from the National Park Foundation, the official charity of America’s national parks.

With this grant Homestead will reimburse schools for transportation costs incurred while bringing 4th grade students to the monument.

“This grant will allow schools from all over the region to experience their National Park Service site and help the monument to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the creation of the National Park Service,” said Homestead Monument Park Superintendent Mark Engler.

The grant, part of the Foundation’s Open OutDoors for Kids program, supports the White House youth initiative Every Kid in a Park.

“These generous grants will ensure children across the country have an opportunity to experience the great outdoors in their community while developing a lifelong connection to our nation’s land, water and wildlife,” said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell.

National Park Foundation grants have made it possible for more than 400,000 students (including this year’s grantees) to visit national parks and other public lands and waters.

“Through our grants that provide funding for transportation and in-park learning, we are able to connect youth and their families to these special places and inspire people across the country to find their park which, in turn, can foster a lifelong connection to all that public lands and waters have to offer,” said Will Shafroth, president of the National Park Foundation.

Homestead National Monument of America will distribute the grant on a first come basis. If you are interested please contact the monument staff at 402-223-3514.

Have Your Contact Details Changed?

Have you moved? Have you changed your name by marriage? Are you planning to move?

If so, you can update your NSEA membership information online.

How? Log on to the NSEA website and click on the ‘Member Info’ button on the left side of the screen.

Then click on the ‘For Members’ link and look for the ‘Member Update’ icon in the center of the next screen, and follow directions. Keep your issue of The Voice near, as the mailing label includes your membership number, used to access your information.

The NSEA website is at: www.nsea.org



Twitter 101: Omaha Education Association member Eddie Ventura Jr., right, introduced members of the Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN) to Twitter as a professional development tool during SEAN's Spring Conference at Peru State College last year.

Frequent. Flexible. Free.

For Top-Notch
Professional
Development,
Consider Twitter.

As the technology teacher at Castelar Elementary School in Omaha, Edward Ventura Jr. loves to learn about the best new approaches to teaching his students.

So Ventura has come to rely on Twitter.

"I'm the only technology teacher in my building, so trying to work with someone in my area of focus just doesn't happen easily," he said. "At night, using Twitter, I can work with folks from all over the world and learn new things for my classroom."

Indeed, one online review of Twitter says that – entertainment aspects aside – the

messaging program has replaced self-help books as the go-to method for self-improvement. Another analysis calls Twitter "the best classroom the Internet has to offer.

Every scenario, every theory, every failed attempt gets highlighted so that through our experiences and synthesized efforts we learn and grow beyond traditional means."

Ventura and thousands of other teachers use Twitter for personal professional development, building personal learning networks in which they interact and learn from educators across the country and around the world.

Did we note that professional discussions on Twitter are frequent, flexible and free?

"Twitter allows professional development to happen more often, and on your own time," said Ventura. "And it's not costing anyone anything."

Nightly Mini-Conference

It was at a Nebraska Educational Technology Association Conference that Ventura learned that teachers could utilize Twitter to share and learn from other teachers.

"I really thought that was interesting," said Ventura. "I got involved, and then started sharing with people nationwide and even worldwide.

"It's like my own mini-conference every night," he said.

He likes the fact that most educational chats are at a set time every week, every other week or every month, and have a moderator to keep the discussion moving.

Guest presenters are included from time to time.

He has had Twitter discussions with his superintendent, the school board president and others, and has promoted his classroom and NSEA. Staff at Castelar use a Twitter chat to promote events and accomplishments in their building.

He advises that Twitter is useful for teachers at all stages of their careers – everyone will find something on Twitter, he said. Twitter novices would be advised to download the application to their smart phone and create an account, or create an account on their desk computer.

"Sign up, look for a chat you like. Watch it for one hour," he said. "If you find something meaningful, then respond."

Good Starting Point

Ventura compiled this list, and is a regular participant on a half-dozen or so of these chats. A favorite is the Nebraska Education Chat, held each Wednesday at 8 p.m. (CST), created by Nebraska educators.

He would like to see more Nebraska educators involved with the #nebedchat, but enjoys the weekly discussion nevertheless.

"They usually focus on one topic each week, but there are side conversations."

This listing is a good start for anyone interested in taking a first step into Twitter. The chat times are for the Central Time Zone, and may vary.

Nebraska Education

Find it at: #nebedchat

Details: Meets Wednesday at 8 p.m., and allows Nebraska educators to get together on Twitter "to collaborate, learn from each other, and grow as educators."



Early Childhood

Find it at: #ECEchat

Details: A chat for all early childhood educators, this discussion takes place at 8:30 p.m. on Tuesday.

Kindergarten and Early Childhood

Find it at: #kinderchat

Details: The hashtag is “open 24/7,” however formal chat times are on Monday evenings at 8 p.m. Each 40-minute session allows participants to “engage in real-life, nitty-gritty, down-low-and-dirty Topic Talks with those working with and teaching Young Children.”

First Grade Teachers

Find it at: #1stchat

Details: “A group of excited 1st grade teachers who love to learn and share ideas.” The group meets to discuss items like literacy, math and technology, with discussion at 7 p.m. each Sunday. The group also hosts a blog at: weare1stchat.com/

Fourth Grade Teachers

Find it at: #4thchat

Details: This account is billed as a “great way to find teachers who you could follow or ask questions that could be answered by others outside your school walls.” Conversation begins Monday at 7 p.m.

Fifth Grade Teachers

Find it at: #5thchat

Details: This chat calls itself a “passionate group of individuals interested in chatting about topics in education, especially as they relate to Grade 5.” The chat takes place on Tuesday evening at 7 p.m.

Sixth Grade Teachers

Find it at: #6thchat

Details: This is a chat “that can be used to chat, collaborate, and grow with other sixth grade educators from around the globe. It’s a great way to help grow your PLN and share ideas with others.” Search for the hashtag above and join the conversation on Tuesdays 8 p.m.

Seventh Grade Teachers

Find it at: #7thchat

Details: This late evening chat starts at 10 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month. The chat will include teachers from around the globe discussing education topics as they support and learn from each other.

Middle School

Find it at: #mschat

Details: Every Thursday at 7 p.m., find this chat which has connected with hun-

dreds of other educators, and has engaged education authors like Alfie Kohn, Seth Godin and others.

Middle School Math

Find it at: #msmathchat

Details: Join middle school math teachers from across the U.S., Monday at 8 p.m.

Aspiring Educational Administrators

Find it at: #Admin2B

Details: A discussion aimed at “educators who are wanting to break into the world of administration.” Discussion begins Monday at 7 p.m.

Educational Technology

Find it at: #edtechchat

Details: Takes place at 7 p.m. on Monday, and discusses everything from digital products, to technology and social media.

English Language Learners

Find it at: #ellchat

Details: “A repository for ideas related to teaching English Language Learners.” Discussion takes place at 8 p.m. Monday.

English Teachers

Find it at: #engchat

Details: A network of English teachers connecting with one and another via Twitter to share ideas, resources and inspiration. The chat happens Monday at 6 p.m.

Flipped Classroom Teachers

Find it at: #flipclass

Details: Flipclass chat began as a way for flipped classroom teachers to collaborate in real time to encourage daily growth in the classroom. There are many issues that are common in any flipped class and this is a

great way to address some of the common ones each week. Monday at 7 p.m.

Learn Like a Pirate

Find it at: #LEARNLap

Details: A recent chat looked at “Giving the Power to Your Students – Who Owns the Learning?” Every Monday at 7 p.m., participants discuss such topics from “Learn Like a Pirate.” Archives of past chats are kept at www.learnlikeapirate.com/learnlap

Music Teachers Chat

Find it at: #musedchat

Details: Each Monday at 7 p.m., music teachers get together and share ideas about important topics within music education. It’s a great chance to interact directly with educators from all over the world and to get new tips and tricks to help you succeed in the classroom.

Personalized Learning

Find it at: #plearnchat

Details: This chat is billed as a place to “discover why personalizing learning is the key design element to transform education.” Meets every other Monday at 6 p.m.

Social Studies Teachers Chat

Find it at: #sschat

Details: Every Monday at 6 p.m., participants discuss social studies issues. The last Monday each month is a combined English and social studies chat called #engsschat.

Teach Like a Pirate

Find it at: #tlap

Details: Based off the Dave Burgess book *Teach Like a Pirate*, this chat works to help teachers design creative lessons that “engage students and make school fun.” Monday evening at 8 p.m.

LeadupNow

Find it at: #leadupchat

Details: Meeting at 8:30 a.m. on each Saturday, this chat calls itself “a dynamic ed movement focused on leadership, culture, growth” and more.

New Teachers to Twitter

Find it at: #Nt2t

Details: This Twitter chat is dedicated to those educators who are new to Twitter. Join them each Saturday morning at 8 a.m. for a weekly discussion.

Saturday Chat for Leaders

Saturday Chat for Leaders – West Coast

Find it at: #satchat and #satchatwc

Details: #Satchat is a global discussion

for current and emerging school leaders. Over time it has expanded to the West Coast (#SatchatWC) and now to the other side of the world in Oceania at #SatchatOC. The #satchat sessions begin at 7:30 a.m. Saturday.

21st Century Education Chat

Find it at: #21stedchat

Details: Chat moderators say “Our mission for our 21st century chat is to create a positive 21st century learning environment for our students by sharing resources and ideas that have worked in our classrooms.” It starts at 7 p.m. Sunday.

AP Literature

Find it at: #aplitchat

Details: Discussing books, good writing and posing questions like “What makes a good ending?” The chat meets at 8 p.m. Sunday.

High School Athletic Directors

Find it at: #hsADchat

Details: A weekly chat dedicated to high school Athletic Directors. The chat will discuss topics related to job, such as; department branding, social media, coach challenges, student-athlete programs, facility challenges, parental issues, strength and conditioning...and more. Chat will take place at 8 p.m. Sunday.

Iowa Ed Chat

Find it at: #iaedchat

Details: This chat takes place each Sunday at 8 p.m., and is designed to engage educators from across Iowa and around the country. Each week’s chat is Storified and can be found at https://storify.com/Aaron_Becker32/#stories

Educational Leadership

Find it at: #mnlead

Details: Search for #mnlead on Google or other search engines and to find a website by Canadian Erin Petley entitled Teaching With a Purpose. Engage in discussions like Adventures in a Classroom Library, Wild About Reading and more. Sunday at 7 p.m.

Title Talk

Find it at: #titletalk

Details: This chat is home to great conversations about how to best promote reading to students, and discussions on the titles teachers can share with students and with each other. Participate at 7 p.m. on Sunday.

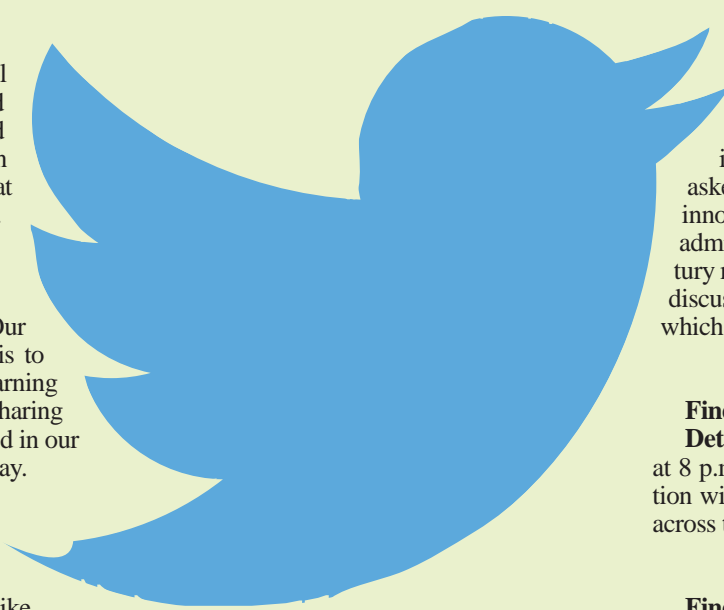
AP Human Geography

Find it at: #aphgchat

Details: A chat helping AP Human Geography teachers. Follow @APHumanGeog for information regarding chat. Moderators change weekly. 8 p.m. Thursday.

Arts in Education

Find it at: #artsed



Details: This is a weekly organized discussion of educators from all over the world who are interested in education. A recent post asked this question: How do teachers innovate for 21st century teaching if the administrators are steeped in 20th century methodology and pedagogy? Join the discussion – or check in later in the day – which begins at 11 a.m. on Tuesday.

Elementary Music

Find it at: #elmused

Details: This 30-minute chat, starting at 8 p.m. each Tuesday, invites a conversation with elementary music educators from across the U.S. and Canada.

Maker Ed

Find it at: #makerED

Details: This is “a group of teachers working in K-12 schools to bring the idea of making into the classroom. Some of us have full makerspaces or fablabs. Others are bringing the ideas and philosophy of DIY to their “regular” disciplines.” The group chats at 6 p.m. each Tuesday.

Rural Education

Find it at: #RuralEdChat

Details: Rural Ed Chat focuses on the needs of the rural educator. It meets on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m.

Special Education

Find it at: #spedchat

Details: Meeting at 8 p.m. Tuesday, this chat discusses topics like “how to proactively prepare substitute teachers for diverse learners.” The hashtag is used for a “daily, continuous research and resource sharing on issues related to and affecting students with disabilities,” as well as for the scheduled weekly twitter chat.

AP Language

Find it at: #aplangchat

Details: Meets for a chat each Wednesday at 7 p.m. Participants do not have to teach Advanced Placement to participate

Educational Coaching

Find it at: #educoach

Details: Meets on Wednesday at 9 p.m. and uses the hashtag throughout the week to share resources, ask questions and collaborate with instructional coaches.

Parent-Teacher Chat

Find it at: #ptchat

Details: Meets Wednesday at 8 p.m., this conversation is hosted by the Institute for Educational Leadership, and includes parents, advocates, family engagement practitioners, teacher leaders, principals and other school partners. Discussion centers on ways to improve family engagement practices and partnerships between parents and teacher.

Details: Meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, this chat discusses all aspects of arts education, from the benefits of arts education to defining arts integration.

Math

Find it at: #edtechmath

Details: What does it mean to be a courageous math teacher? That is just one of the recent questions posed on this chat dedicated to allowing math teachers to chat about effective ways of using technology and tools. Discussions begin at 7 p.m. each Thursday.

Games in Education

Find it at: #games4ed

Details: This Twitter chat is for all educators interested in games in education. Participate each Thursday at 7 p.m. For details on upcoming chats, resources and archives, go to: www.gamindex.org/games4ed-twit-ter-chat

Journalism Educators, Advisors

Find it at: #jerdchat

Details: Billed as an “evolving collection of resources for journalism educators,” this chat typically meets Thursday at 7 p.m.

PreCalculus Chat

Find it at: #precalcchat

Details: Thursday evenings at 7:30.

Social Studies Teach Like a Pirate

Find it at: #sstlap

Details: This chat occurs every other Thursday at 8 p.m., and is a further extension of the Teach Like a Pirate program.

Public School Advocates of Color

Find it at: #educolor

Details: Meeting at 5:30 p.m. each Thursday, this chat “seeks to elevate the voices of public school advocates of color on educational equity and justice.”

Education Chat

Find it at: #edchat

For SEAN and NSEA-Retired, Mentoring Fits

Sign Up Now for Program that Ties Retirees to Students As Mentors

Every first-year teacher should have a mentor.

If that fact holds true, perhaps every student teacher should also have an experienced ear to listen to concerns and questions.

You can make that happen by participating in the NSEA-Retired Intergenerational Mentoring Program!

The 13th edition of the mentoring program will take shape beginning at 12:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 12, at NSEA Headquarters in Lincoln. A short 24 hours later, and participants will be matched with a veteran teacher willing to serve as a mentor and sounding board for the next 12 to 18 months or longer.

Here is what Peru State College's Keri Andersen said following the March 2015 session of Intergenerational Mentoring: "My highlight was getting to know myself as a person at a deeper level and getting to know the people that I did. It was very amazing how we could spend only a day or less and develop relationships that we can carry for life."

The long-running program pairs NSEA-Retired members with members of the Student Education Association of Nebraska – college students – during the student's junior year in teacher education. The NSEA-Retired members act as mentors to the student members from their junior year through their senior student teaching semester and into their first year as a professional teacher.

The relationship between the mentor and the student is non-judgmental and non-evaluative. The mentor can help the prospective teacher get through the tough day-to-day moments and challenging situations that every student teacher and every first-year teacher will face. Through telephone, e-mail, and face-to-face conversations, the student knows he or she has an experienced mentor to ask for an idea for a lesson, a hint for handling a discipline problem, or a trusting shoulder to lean on.

Sessions will be held at NSEA headquarters, and begin at 12:30



Box of Goodies: One of the benefits of attending the 2015 Intergenerational Mentoring Program was the box of gently used classroom materials for student participants. Creighton University's Laura Magana also picked up a nice red apple!

p.m. Friday, Feb. 12. The program concludes on Saturday at 1:30 p.m. Housing is provided by NSEA.

Registration for the no-cost program is open! For details, call Duane Obermier at 1-800-742-0047. To sign up as a mentor, go to:

www.nsea.org/2016IGLMentor

To sign up as a mentee, go to:

www.nsea.org/2016IGM

Children's Fund: It's Meant to Be Used

Members Can Access Fund to Help Children

Since the first few donated dollars trickled into the NSEA's Children Fund coffers in 1994, dollars have been exiting the fund to assist children in need.

That is the founding principle of the Children's Fund: to help children. Now, as winter tightens on Nebraska, Association members see students each day in need of warm winter gear. They see children who are in need of glasses, short-term medical care, perhaps even food or utilities at home.

When a child faces such needs, it makes it ever more difficult to learn.

Of course teachers want to help each and every child, and often use their own funds in that endeavor. A single teacher cannot help every child, so NSEA founded the Children's Fund. When an NSEA member spots a child in need, all that member needs to do is call or e-mail the NSEA, describe the situation, and in a matter of a day or two, funding can be made available to assist the child or the child's family meet reasonable needs.

The fund was meant to be used. Don't shy from calling.

The Children's Fund relies purely on do-



nations from members, from local associations and from outside donors who understand the need and see the Children's Fund as a just cause. NSEA members are the biggest contributors to the fund, and the fund is always in need. In the past two years, the Children's Fund has provided nearly \$90,000 in relief.

To donate — or to receive funds to help a child — there is no red tape, no form to fill out. Simply contact the NSEA at 1-800-742-0047 and ask for Sally Bodtke. Or e-mail her at:

sally.bodtke@nsea.org

Good News: Legislature Funds NBC Reimbursement

Sears Says 'Money Well Spent' to Benefit Kids By Covering Majority of Certification Costs

There is great news for teachers seeking National Board Certification!

During the 2015 session of the Nebraska Legislature, senators appropriated funding to reimburse the registration costs – up to \$1,975 – for those educators who seek National Board Certification.

The NBC designation is managed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and is the most respected professional certification available in education today. The program was designed to develop, retain and recognize accomplished teachers, and to generate ongoing school improvement.

Teacher licensure systems set basic certification requirements in each state, but National Board Certification signifies that teachers have, of their own volition, gone much further.

The two-year funding for the National Board Certification program came with the approval of LB185, introduced by Lincoln Sen. Kate Bolz. NSEA gave

LB185 full support, and Organizational Specialist Jay Sears testified before the Education Committee and said the benefits far outweigh the cost of the program.

“Any assistance we can give to teachers to improve their skills is money well spent,” he said. “Nebraska students will clearly benefit from this program.”

Lincoln Education Association’s Sherry West told the senators certification was difficult and worthwhile.

“I examined current research on best practice, I watched videos of myself teaching and wrote about how my work could be improved,” West told senators.

“I was asked to provide rationale on every decision I made in designing a lesson, implementing a lesson, in how I assessed student learning and provided student feedback. The process brought a renewed awareness to my work – what could easily have been turned over to auto-pilot after so many years.”

LB185 also appropriated funding for

Westside’s Jagels Earns National Board Certification

To date, 117 Nebraska teachers have earned National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification. Those ranks now include another NSEA member: Lindsey Jagels, a sixth grade teacher at Sunset Elementary School for the Westside Community Schools.

National Board Certification is the most respected professional certification available in education and is designed to develop, retain and recognize accomplished teachers and to generate ongoing improvement in schools nationwide.

Jagels earned certification as a generalist/middle childhood, and her certification will stand until November 2025.

For details on NBTS certification, go to: www.nbpts.org

\$5,000 annual salary bumps for educators who currently hold National Board Certification. Educators with such certification should contact their administration to apply for the salary bonus.

For details on certification, click on the ‘Master Teacher Website’ link at:

education.ne.gov/EducatorPrep

Questions? Send an email to:

NDE.adultprograms@nebraska.gov

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*Tuition is subject to change.

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Minority Leadership Training Adds Two

Six NSEA Members on Team For NEA Training

By Edward Ventura, Jr. Chair
Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee

A call to NSEA minority members to attend the National Education Association's Minority Leadership Training (MLT) drew interest from 27 members.

The Association's Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee, chaired by Omaha Education Association's Edward Ventura Jr., voted to send Lincoln Education Association members Daniel Witte and Joseph Rousseau to the Jan. 29-31 training in San Francisco.

The NEA training program prepares educators to lead confidently and consciously by focusing on a student-centered agenda and social justice issues that impact their students, schools and communities. The NEA training curriculum supports the needs of members at all levels of the leadership continuum — "emerging" to "experienced" leaders, appointed or elected to the highest local, state and national leadership positions.

Witte and Rousseau join Isau Metes, Lincoln; Anthony Williams, Omaha; Tanisha Butler, Bellevue; and Rosey Krauel, Douglas County West; at the training, funded by NEA. Members funded by the Omaha Education Association are Faith Johnson and Ayesha Station.

These NSEA members indicated interest in attending: Ita Mendoza, Harvard; Maria Eleanor Del Rosario and Maira Méndez Rodríguez, Lincoln; Jenna Christensen, Columbus; Deanna Urbanec, Winnebago; M. Vanessa Gascón-Guarcas, Emerson-Hubbard; Keeley Bibins, Darilyn Carroll, Sasha Cervantes, Dorothy Dombeck, April Morris, Tasha Waller, Andre' Waller, Chris Wiley, Yvette Woods, Jeremy Rone, Juan Carlos Veloso, Brandy N. Williams, Dr. LeDonna York, all of Omaha; Antonio Cantu, Metro Community College; Anna McVay, Lincoln; Jason Blanco, Scottsbluff; and Claude A. Louishomme, University of Nebraska at Kearney.

Ventura thanked those who applied.

"We would like to thank those who showed interest in attending the MLT, and hope to encourage more ethnic minorities to get involved in the future," he said.

Out of the Dragon's Mouth

Out of the Dragon's Mouth is an historical fiction novel told through the voice of a young girl, Mai, who lived a life of privilege before the war in Vietnam.

Once Saigon fell to the communists, her parents sent Mai and an uncle out of the country to escape, in hopes of reuniting in America with another family member already in the United States.

This engaging narrative highlights the struggles faced by many refugees as they flee their home country and await exile to another country. Many stories exist about the plight of refugees coming to the United States. The book explores the difficulties experienced while waiting in a refugee camp — the frustrations, uncertainties, and cruelties. Author Joyce Burn Zeiss creates a believable story of one girl's experiences. The characters are believable but at times seem under developed. This may be due to the author's attempt to highlight characteristics of the Vietnamese culture of honor and family pri-

Culturally Competent Educators

At a restaurant in Costa Rica, you have finished your meal and are ready to leave. You still have not received the check/ bill, however. Why?

- You didn't eat all your food and your plate is not clean.
- You are expected to settle your payment at the door.
- You never asked for it.

Answer: In Costa Rica and many other countries, waiters usually bring your check only after you have asked for it. It would be considered rude to bring it before then, as you might think they want you to leave.

Source: Diversity Committee, Liberty Elementary School

vacy.

Still, the many situations Mai faces as she is coming of age in a new and confusing place allows the reader to think more deeply about the effects of war and the resettlement process of refugees. Many poignant scenes make the story engaging. The author offsets some of the more depressing moments by developing Mai's friendships with other refugees.

The reader learns a bit about some of the other circumstances that brought different people to the refugee camp. This will provide an excellent jumping off point to research other stories about refugees and refugee camps.

Reviewed by Tish Rezac Lincoln Education Association

EMAC to Meet in Omaha

The next meeting of the NSEA Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee will begin at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Jan. 30, at the Omaha Education Association. Tentative discussion issues will include training on getting elected and minority leadership opportunities.

For details, contact EMAC Chair Edward Ventura Jr. at: venturaomaha@gmail.com

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Czech Republic
& Croatia
June 15, 2016-June 27, 2016

For more information: E-mail or call Jan at jarper1@live.com /402.469.6579

Included:

Round-trip airfare, all transportation, sightseeing tours and site visits, all hotels with private bathrooms, on-tour tipping, meals per itinerary, full-time multi-lingual tour director. All-inclusive insurance available.

Highlights:

- Prague
- Terezin
- Karlovy Vary
- Plzen
- Cesky Krumlov
- Zagreb
- Split
- Plitvice Nat'l Park
- Hvar Island
- Dubrovnik

Save With Dave

If you are planning a spring break or summer vacation trip, check out the bargains available through the NEA Rental Car Program.

The NEA Member Benefits program has secured bargain discounts from five national car rental chains, giving you nationwide coverage and service. Your NSEA membership gives you access to these programs, and the discounts on these rentals and other Member Benefits programs give you the opportunity to more than make up for Association dues.

Here is a brief look at the car rental offerings through NEA Member Benefits:

■ **Hertz:** Through this program, NSEA members save up to 25 percent; the qualified additional driver fee is waived; there is unlimited mileage; and members receive free membership in the Hertz No. 12 Club Gold, plus 500 bonus points.

■ **Alamo:** Under the Alamo plan, there is no charge for a second driver; mileage is unlimited; and there are other available member discounts and coupons.

■ **Enterprise:** With 6,000 locations, it will be easy to rent and return vehicles; there are member discounts on everyday low rates; and there is free pick up and return of vehicles.

■ **National:** This plan also offers unlimited mileage, and savings coupons offer \$25 off rental of premium or luxury vehicles; a free weekend day; a one car class upgrade; and \$25 off a weekly rental.

■ **Dollar:** Through the Dollar Rent A Car program, members save 5 percent on each rental; enjoy a designated lines and counter area for preferred service; and earn free days through the Dollar Express Renter Rewards program.

With such selection, and such savings, there is no doubt you'll save cash through the NEA Member Benefits Rental Car program. Travel safely!

NEA Saves You Money!

Check the NEA Member Benefits website for constantly updated programs designed to save you money. It is one of the great benefits of Association membership. Travel, financial, insurance and other discounts are available to members.

Learn more about all the great NEA Member Benefits programs at:

neamb.com

David Glenn is Nebraska's NEA Member Benefits representative



Glenn

3 Suggestions To Help You Get Out of Debt

Change These Bad Habits and Put a Dent in What You Owe

By Andrea Brown

Do you feel as if you'll be in debt forever? Join the club. One survey found that 13 percent of Americans think they'll never pay back all their loans, and another 8 percent say they won't pay off what they owe until they're in their 70's.

Finding yourself buried in debt can be discouraging, but there's hope. We've rounded up three common reasons people can't get out of debt — and offer advice on how to turn things around.

Your Mortgage Is Too Big

The American Dream can turn into a nightmare if you take on a bigger mortgage than you can afford. Today, the average homeowner's mortgage makes up 69 percent of total household debt. If your mortgage is too much of a load for you to carry, you might need to find a roommate to help cover costs, downsize to a less expensive home, or rent instead of owning until you can save enough for a big down payment.

If your goal is to become mortgage-free as fast as possible, adding a little extra to your monthly payment is an easy way to get there. Let's say you have a 30-year, \$200,000 mortgage with 25 years remaining and a 4.5 percent interest rate. By paying just \$100 more per month toward your principle, you'd save nearly \$21,000 in interest and be out of debt almost four years early.

Your Emergency Fund Is Too Small

A major health expense, surprise home repair or sudden job loss could deal a blow to anyone's finances. Yet, only 38 percent of the people polled by Bankrate have enough cash on hand to cover such emergencies. Many people said they'd have to ask a family mem-

ber or friend for the money or foot the bill with a credit card. Either way, you could end up drowning in debt if you have to borrow cash every time an unexpected expense surfaces.

That's why it's important to put away enough money to cover six months' worth of living expenses. If

that sounds like a lot, you don't have to do it all at once. You can use a free service such as Digit to automatically set aside a little bit at a time. Once Digit is connected to your bank account, it analyzes your income and spending habits to determine how much you can afford to contribute to an emergency fund.

Your Interest Rates Are Too High

The higher your interest rates, the more you'll have to pay to wipe out your debt — and possibly the more time it will take.

Say you have a \$10,000 balance on a credit card with a 15 percent annual percentage rate, which is typical these days. If you pay \$225 a month, it will take 5 1/2 years and almost \$4,700 in interest to pay off your debt.

But if your APR is 11.6 percent, which is the average for low-rate cards, you'd be debt-free seven months faster and save more than \$1,500 in interest.

Call your credit card company to see if your rate can be lowered. If not, consider taking advantage of a zero percent balance transfer offer from another credit card company. A third option is to consolidate your high interest credit card debt into a lower-rate personal loan.



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Kiplinger

NEA Sets Sights on D.C.

NSEA Delegation will Number 100; You Can Attend, Influence Association's Path

Each year in July, about 9,000 educators from around the country get together in one convention hall to talk about issues and challenges facing public schools.

This year, that event will happen at Washington, D.C., at the National Education Association's annual meeting, known as Representative Assembly. About 100 Nebraska delegates will attend July 2-7. If you have an interest in attending, this would be a great year to do so!

All active NSEA members are eligible to serve. In addition, there are provisions for student members and retirees to attend.

NSEA's larger local associations — those with 76 members or more — will hold internal elections to select RA delegates. If you belong to an association of 76 members or more, and are interested in serving as a delegate, contact your local association president, or talk to your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047.

In all other cases, those who wish to be considered must qualify through one of the categories listed below and must file their intent to seek election as a delegate through the NSEA website at:

www.nsea.org

Those members who wish to seek a delegate spot by filing through the website will need their NSEA membership ID number to do so. That 10-digit individualized number can be found on each member's NSEA Access membership card; above the member's name on *The Voice* mailing label; or above the member's name in the e-mail that delivers the digital issue of *The Voice*.

When filing, candidates have the option of completing a 50-word statement that can be reviewed by voters.

The deadline for filing is Friday, Feb. 5. The member's filing details will be posted to the NSEA website within 24 hours. If you do not see your name on the website list of candidates by Monday, Feb. 8, contact NSEA immediately.

Questions? Reach NSEA's Patty Schroer at:

patty.schroer@nsea.org

Here are the categories:

District At-Large RA Cluster Delegates

For the purpose of electing delegates, local associations with fewer than 76 members are grouped in clusters in each of NSEA's six governance districts. For instance, all local associations in Elkhorn District with fewer than 76 members will vote on a common set of candidates for delegate to RA.

There are approximately 10 openings for Cluster Delegates from the Capitol, Elkhorn and Tri-Valley districts; eight from Metro District; seven from the Sandhills District; three from the Panhandle District. Cluster delegates fund their own Representative Assembly costs.

Members interested in serving as a Cluster Delegate must complete the online filing by the Friday, Feb. 5, deadline.

At-Large Delegates

Any active NSEA member is eligible to place his or her name on the statewide, At-Large Delegate ballot by filing through the NSEA website. Those elected as statewide delegates will be reimbursed for transportation, lodging and meal expenses. Depending on several factors, four to five of these delegate slots will be available to At-Large candidates. Again, the filing deadline is Friday, Feb. 5.



The Sign is Right! The message from these Nebraska delegates at the 2015 NEA Delegate Assembly in Orlando was clear and on target: You should be here! From left are Peru State College student L.A. Adams; Willie Banks, Lincoln; Tamara Bailey, Omaha; and Broderick Steed, Umo'hoⁿ Nation.

NSEA-Retired Delegates

Members of Nebraska's retired affiliate (NSEA-Retired) elect their NEA representatives to the RA by statewide balloting. Members will receive mail-in ballots in March.

Up to three delegates will be elected at large; one delegate will be elected by the combined retired membership of Capitol, Elkhorn, Panhandle, Sandhills and Tri-Valley Districts; and one delegate will be elected by the retired membership of the Metro District. An individual filing as a district delegate may also file as an at-large delegate.

Members of NSEA-Retired wishing to file must complete the form that will appear under the NSEA-Retired tab on the NSEA website by Friday, Feb. 5. That form will be available in January. Also required: a biography of no more than 50 words.

Student Delegates

Members of the Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN) elect their RA representatives by statewide balloting. SEAN members wishing to file as delegates must complete an on-line filing process by Tuesday, March 1. Watch *The Voice* and the SEAN newsletter for details.

Questions? Call your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047.

The Pros: Doctors, Lawyers and...Teachers?

“
The
definition of
professionalism
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”

The common meaning of “professional” is partly captured by such words as expert, ethical, responsible. The problem is not the common meaning of professionalism, but its meanings in statutes, policies, and practices. Debates focus on two major approaches to professionalism: 1) a managerialist view that emphasizes efficient school management by private sector business models; and 2) a democratic professionalism vision that focuses on collaboration and learning between teachers, university researchers, and community stakeholders.

For several decades, the question of whether to describe the job of teaching in public schools as a profession has been argued and debated among legislators, academic researchers, and the general public. But besides a sense of pride and accomplishment, what real difference does it make to teachers what the job is called? It matters a great deal. Recognized professionals enjoy significantly higher salary and, perhaps more importantly, more control over their work and greater autonomy in the professional decisions they make on behalf of their students.

‘Semi-Professionals’

So, although common practice may recognize skilled work as “professional,” what really makes an occupation a recognized profession? For the last century, doctors and lawyers have successfully distinguished their work as professional on the basis of three major criteria: 1) Development of highly specialized knowledge; 2) The autonomous direction of their own work; and 3) An ethics-based duty of care for their clients that is enforced by sanctions or loss of licensure. These three points are significantly interrelated in defining who can make decisions about professional work.

Critics defend the designation of teachers as so-called “semi-professionals” by pointing to the fact that medicine and law create and develop new professional knowledge through their practice, while teachers and other semi-professionals, instead of creating knowledge, only apply or communicate knowledge to others. The subordinate relationship of teachers to administra-

tive authority is justified by the assumption that much of the authority for autonomous, professional work is based on the expert creation of specialized knowledge.

Further Complications

Some claim that teachers, nurses, social workers, and engineers are in a sort of middle ground between a broader category of employees and the professions. These occupations are part of the semi-professions that are employed by others and are administratively directed by others (who are also not necessarily professionals). Sites include schools, medical facilities, and social agencies. In these situations, administrators decide whether the decision of a semi-professional is appropriate by comparing it to the policies and directives of the organization.

In contrast to medicine and law, teachers (as employees in bureaucratized systems) generally do not control licensure, entry or expulsion from the profession, although teachers as well as doctors and lawyers are held to high standards of professional conduct. The situation for teachers is further complicated by the public nature of the service of teaching, in which the determination of specific educational goals and methods is primarily a political decision of the system, rather than a professional judgment of the individual teacher.

The current public and political debates on educational issues are very much debates on the control of teachers...and their classrooms. Teachers are already subject to controls and supervision that is more appropriate to the factory than to democratic professionalism. The vision of the teacher as a professional practitioner is a vision that offers substantive improvements for our current educational model. Unfortunately, this vision is in direct opposition to the current managerialist reforms that seek “designer employees” that are compliant, efficient, and willing to produce educational results as market commodities. Principals used to be collegial “principal teachers.” Now they are increasingly asked to be line managers for a business model system. The definition of professionalism is a struggle that will determine the very nature of teaching in our schools. And that matters for all of us.



Degreed and certificated: NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen is proud to be a professional teacher with a University of Nebraska degree and a Professional Teaching Certificate.

Come to Lobby Day and Change the Future!

Success in the Past Includes Changes to Taxes on Social Security Income

If February is near, it must be time for another NSEA-Retired Lobby Day!

On Tuesday, Feb. 2, members of NSEA-Retired will gather in Lincoln to address legislative issues. Of particular concern to retirees is the taxation of Social Security benefits. The Nebraska Legislature passed LB987 two years ago to reduce the tax burden on Social Security beneficiaries. Details of a potential bill to further reduce the state income tax on Social Security are in the works.

During Lobby Day, NSEA-Retired members have a chance to be brought up-to-date on issues, will visit with senators about bills that NSEA has identified as priority bills for education interests, and will hear from Speaker of the Legislature Sen. Galen Hadley.

Please register for Lobby Day on the NSEA-Retired website or call Rebecca Smith at 1-800-742-0047. The deadline for registration and to attend the luncheon is Friday, Jan. 29. There is no registration fee for members to attend Lobby Day. Guests are asked to pay \$10 to cover the costs of the program. The website is at:

www.nsea.org/retired

Elections Coming in March 2016

NSEA-Retired members will elect two general officers of the Association next spring: secretary and treasurer. Current NSEA-Retired Secretary Jan Barnason, and current NSEA-Retired Treasurer Art Tanderup are eligible to seek re-election if they choose to do so.

Three of the six District Director positions are also up for election. District Directors will be elected for Metro Region No. 1, Panhandle and Tri-Valley districts. Current Metro Region No. 1 Director John Jensen, Panhandle Director Jim McDermott, and Tri-Valley Director Guy Roggenkamp are eligible to run for re-election if they choose to do so. All of these officers will be elected to three-year terms, beginning August 15.

Delegates will also be elected to represent the retired members at NSEA Delegate Assembly (to be held in Lincoln on April 15-16) as well as delegates to NEA Representative Assembly (to be held in Washington, D.C., July 2-7). Delegates to NSEA-DA and NEA-RA are elected for one-year terms.

Complete details regarding the election procedures (including the filing deadline) as well as the process for filing for election will be posted on the NSEA-Retired website after January 10. Any NSEA-Retired member in good standing is eligible to seek



NSEA-Retired at NEA Representative Assembly

NSEA-Retired leaders attending the NEA Representative Assembly in Orlando in July pose for a photo in front of a quilt with an educational theme. NSEA-Retired members will soon elect delegates to the 2016 Representative Assembly, set for July 2-9 in Washington, D.C. (see details on this page). From left are Carol Krejci and Walta Sue Dodd, Omaha; Pat Etherton, Lincoln; Tom Black, West Point; and John Jensen and Roger Rea, Omaha.

office. Candidates for district director, NSEA Delegate Assembly or NEA Representative Assembly must live in the NSEA District they wish to represent. A map of the NSEA District boundaries is printed for your reference.

www.nsea.org/retired

2016 Intergenerational Mentoring Gears Up

Every teacher can recall receiving much needed help from a veteran teacher when they first start out in the world of education. The NSEA-Retired Intergenerational Mentoring Project brings NSEA-Retired members and Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN) members in the junior or senior year of their college program together to begin that kind of collaboration.

This mentoring links retirees with SEAN members to help them make the transition from being a full-time student to becoming a full-time teacher. The program needs you to share your vast experience with the next generation of public school educators. We are seeking more NSEA-Retired volunteers to participate in this important program.

The program is set for Friday, Feb. 12, from 1-8 p.m.; and Saturday, Feb. 13, from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. – but those few hours could lead to years of benefits. For details, contact Rebecca Smith at the NSEA at 1-800-742-0047, or apply at:

www.nsea.org/2016IGLMentor

The workshop is held at the NSEA Headquarters in Lincoln, and participants must be available to attend all sessions. All meals are provided and a housing and gas stipend is provided for participants living outside of Lincoln.

— Renae Kelly, Editor
renaekelly@gmail.com

OEA Duo Earns NEA Grants

Foundation Funds Writer's Workshop

Omaha Education Association members **Dena Wagner**, a seventh-grade language arts educator, and co-applicant **Jennifer Moore**, of **Norris Middle School**, have received a \$2,000 Student Achievement Grant from the NEA Foundation to motivate their students to become critical thinkers and writers in a writer's workshop.

The NEA Foundation announced that it is awarding grants to 39 educators in 22 states for a total of \$144,000.

The NEA Foundation awards two levels of grant funding, \$2,000 or \$5,000, for two categories of grants to public education professionals: Student Achievement Grants for initiatives to improve academic achievement, and Learning and Leadership Grants for high-quality educational professional development activities.

A team of 20 educators, many former grantees, reviewed applications and evaluated each one against a set of criteria. Funded grants were selected for the quality of the grant proposal ideas and their potential for enhancing student achievement.

The NEA Foundation awards its grants to educators three times a year. The next education grant deadline is Feb. 1. Other deadlines will follow on June 1 and Oct. 1. Application forms and a video with step-by-step instructions on how to apply can be found in the Grants to Educators section of the NEA Foundation website at:

neafoundation.org

Charles Sheffield

Charles Sheffield, 76, of Sherman Reservoir, Loup City, formerly of Grand Island, died on Dec. 11, 2015.

Sheffield graduated from Grand Island Senior High and later from Kearney State College. He retired after 38 years of teaching for the Grand Island Public Schools. Always a loyal Association member, he was widely recognized for his work in developing the elementary physical education program for the GIPS. He presented many ideas and activities at the local, state and national level, and was honored many times over as an outstanding physical education teacher.

Sheffield also officiated high school and college football and basketball games for 32 years.

Now is the Time to File! NSEA Board, District Seats Open for Election

There are ample opportunities for NSEA members to seek leadership positions in their state association.

Beginning on March 21, all NSEA members will be able to vote for candidates to fill nearly three dozen district leadership posts, as well as openings on the NSEA's Board of Directors.

The window for filing is now open, and closes Friday, Feb. 5. Voting will take place online, and will begin at 12:01 a.m. on Monday, March 21, and will close at midnight on Monday, April 4.

To see a list of openings, or to file, go to the NSEA website and click on the '2016 District Elections' link. Select your district, and then select the office you are interested in seeking. Those seeking to file will need their 10-digit NSEA membership number. Your number can be found on your NSEA Access membership card; above your name on the mailing la-

bel of *The Voice*.

As a step in the online filing process, all candidates will have an opportunity to provide a 50-word statement about their candidacy. Voters will be able to access that statement during balloting. It may be easiest for candidates to type the statement in a Word or other text document before beginning the process, then paste the statement into the appropriate box during the filing process.

NSEA's Minority Involvement Plan encourages minorities to seek Association office at all levels.

If you do not have access to the Internet, mail your name, address, local association name and a 50-word statement to: NSEA Elections, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Be sure to state which office you are seeking.

In all cases, the deadline for filing for office is Friday, Feb. 5. The website is at:

www.nsea.org

NEA Board Seat Open

When delegates convene at NSEA's Delegate Assembly in Lincoln on April 15, among the duties they will face will be election of a Nebraskan to the NEA Board of Directors. One of NSEA's two spots on the NEA board will be open for election.

Any NSEA member in good standing is eligible. To have a candidate's name on the ballot, the candidate must be nominated from the floor of the assembly during the opening session on Friday evening, April 15, 2015.

A candidate who wishes to seek the board seat, and who wishes to have campaign material included in a delegate mailing, must submit that information to NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen no less than 45 days prior to April 15. The deadline is 11:59 p.m. CST on Tuesday, March 1.

Request PAC Refund Now Annual Request Deadline is Fast Approaching

NSEA's Political Action Committee (NSEA-PAC) is supported by voluntary donations collected with NSEA membership dues.

Support for election of recommended candidates is provided by an annual contribution of \$15 from each NSEA member.

Any NSEA member may request a refund of those contributions for the current membership year. As an alternative to refund, members may also direct that the \$15 contribution be directed to bond election and school ballot issues.

Refund requests must be in writing to NSEA President Nancy Fulton. Each letter must be individually composed, and contain an original signature of the member. Photocopied, computer copies or e-mail messages will not be accepted. Each letter must indicate whether all or part of the contribution is to be refunded, or whether the entire contribution is designated for statewide ballot issues.

Requests for refunds must be postmarked for delivery to NSEA Headquarters no later than Feb. 15, 2016. No refunds will be returned until after that date.

Send requests to NSEA President Nancy Fulton, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Questions? Call NSEA's toll-free number at 1-800-742-0047.